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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 05 PRETORIA 004545

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E.O. 12958: n/a

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [ETRD](#) [KDEM](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [SOCI](#) [SF](#)

SUBJECT: PERSPECTIVES ON NEPAD, ISLAM AND THE USA IN SOUTH AFRICA FROM S/P FACT-FINDING MISSION, OCTOBER 6-10, 2004

REF: A. STATE 195553

[B](#). PRETORIA 04161

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[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: S/P consultations in South Africa October 6-10, 2004 confirmed strong public and private sector support for NEPAD, due largely to Presidents Mbeki and Obasanjo's strong leadership. Expecting legal status as an African Union (AU) entity, the NEPAD Secretariat was optimistic, including about the related African peer review (APR) process, but curious about potential impact on NEPAD of UK Prime Minister Blair's Africa Commission. Most interlocutors stressed the importance of capacity building and encouraged USG engagement with NEPAD but differed on the nature of threats to moderate Islam in Africa. Prominent intellectuals warned that developed and developing countries must bridge the policy divide that, on one hand, contributes to widespread anti-Americanism in Africa, notably a perceived emphasis on antiterrorism to the exclusion of Africa's development concerns, and, on the other, failure to hold African countries accountable on human rights and good governance issues. Business representatives were generally positive about NEPAD's prospects and opined that NEPAD's failure would have serious consequences for the continent. End summary.

CONSULTATIONS IN PRETORIA AND JOHANNESBURG

[1](#)2. (SBU) S/P Deputy Director Ambassador Perina and Africa Specialist James conducted an October 6-10, 2004 fact-finding mission to South Africa on institution building in Africa, notably the African Union's (AU) New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), and Islam in Africa. On October 6-7 meetings in Pretoria and Johannesburg included officials in the South African Government (SAG), NEPAD Secretariat, academicians, think tanks, and NEPAD Business

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Forum. The team met with the Ambassador and DCM and received a briefing by POL, ECON and USAID officers. The Ambassador welcomed the focus on USG support for institution building in Africa, highlighting the AU's strategic role. The Ambassador stressed the importance of working with the Africans and of publicizing our positive interest and track record to counterbalance misrepresentations in the media. She expected the South Africans to respond well to a USG/AU policy dialogue. PolCounselor Brown and Pol/EconOff Walser in Pretoria and Cape Town (see septel) were control officers, respectively.

///SAG LEADERSHIP ROLE IN NEPAD///

[1](#)3. (SBU) Perina explained S/P's policy coordinating role and focus of this mission (interest in dialogue on NEPAD, its major challenges, potential USG support for NEPAD, and perceived anti-Americanism in Muslim communities in Africa) in meetings with the SAG DFA Deputy Director General for Africa Ambassador Mamabola and Chief Director for Multilateral Affairs Ambassador Duarte. Both highlighted Mbeki and Obasanjo's leadership in spearheading NEPAD's creation to address Africa's development problems. Mamabola also cited Algeria, Senegal and Ethiopia as "core group" NEPAD supporters. He said Africa's own contribution to NEPAD and conflict resolution efforts were primary focus, before seeking external assistance, although he hoped for USG support in moving NEPAD forward in the G-8. Mamabola also highlighted the importance of strengthening the Peace and Security Council (PSC), Court of Justice, Pan African Parliament (PAP), and a voluntary, non-punitive Africa Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) to foster good governance "based on African standards," not those of the US, UK, or the West generally. A late October evaluation will monitor results to date. Mamabola said that the SAG was looking carefully at UK PM Blair's Africa Commission, which appeared to duplicate the G-8 action plan itself. Perina noted that NEPAD success would attract support.

///NEPAD///

[1](#)4. (SBU) Duarte explained the planning process that eventually transformed the OAU to the AU, moving beyond "resolutions" to an "instrument" that could independently

field Africa's own peacekeeping troops. She said, "NEPAD was located in the diversity of 53 states," including North Africa, which recently has identified with Sub-Saharan Africa. The Challenge, in her view, was to implement AU directives and harmonize 17 overlapping regional organizations as NEPAD vehicles. Duarte contended that a policy must allow each to remain independent but cooperative on trade and defense issues. SAG views peace and stability as absolute prerequisites, the basic assumption for the African common defense policy of 2003. She listed goals achieved to date: positive role in conflict resolution in Burundi and DRC, plans for creation of an African standby force and a unified SADC position at DOHA. The current strength of leadership binds NEPAD, but the goal, she said, was to find a continent-wide element for success that would be lasting but not treaty-based.

15. (SBU) Sudan/DRC: Duarte noted two objectives in Sudan: keep the Government of Sudan (GOS) on board as a negotiating partner; otherwise the country will be split, and encourage the GOS to develop Darfur, the Upper Nile and other deprived areas. There are currently 410 military observers in Darfur, she stated. Major goals include: disarmament and return of people to their villages and fields to farm, otherwise starvation will result. A SAG Public Service Administration official noted SAG assistance to develop a post conflict reconstruction plan for DRC. Perina advised of a new State Department Office on Coordination for Reconstruction and Stabilization to assist with post conflict events. Duarte expressed interest in this office given NEPAD interest in post conflict "peace management." She noted an October 13-15 NEPAD peace and security workshop on post conflict reconstruction in Johannesburg to be attended by representatives at the ambassadorial level of the heads of state steering committee and partners. Over the next three years, NEPAD's status will be regularized as a legal AU entity. The Secretariat will likely remain in South Africa.

16. (SBU) SAG Message to USG policymakers: Duarte encouraged assistance with development and urged the USG to view the APRM as a non-punitive, long-term investment. She noted that partnership with the USG is very important and asked about potential regional cooperation. She also noted an equal commitment to stop terrorism as manifested by African participation in an October 15 meeting to assist/assess Africa's own counterterrorism efforts to date.

///OPTIMISTIC NEPAD SECRETARIAT///

17. (SBU) NEPAD Secretariat Multilateral Relations Director Sudir Chuckun noted strong support from the Germans (for APRM), Belgium, Dutch and Nordic countries and contact with USAID on specific projects. The UN agencies also have a "cluster system" operating in Africa around NEPAD, which he described as a socio-economic program of the AU that as yet had no legal basis. A 20-member (5 original plus 15 members) NEPAD Implementing Committee is a subgrouping under the HSGIC (Heads of State and Government Implementation Committee), supported by a 45-person Secretariat in Midrand, South Africa. A NEPAD strategic plan is in process. He encouraged life-of-project funding and a more profound engagement on policy with the USG, particularly on trade, market access, and public administration and governance issues.

18. (SBU) Chief Economist Jahed welcomed USG interest in NEPAD. Developing the regional economic commissions (REC) as key NEPAD building blocks is a major goal. Focus is on capacity building, not funding. He said 23 countries have acceded to APRM, a voluntary peer pressure process under NEPAD to foster good governance and accountability. Strategic issues include: debt, market access, corruption, building internal regional trade, developing an early warning system and post conflict reconstruction. A private sector unit exists. The African Business Round Table works with the NEPAD business groups in South Africa, Kenya, Swaziland, Lesotho, and Zambia. Outside SA, the focus is on SMEs. The groups will play a supportive role, according to Jahed, along with other partners (OECD, ADB, Commonwealth Business Council, etc.). There is an advisor on gender/women and others planned for labor and civil society issues.

19. (SBU) NEPAD Secretariat message for USG policymakers: It is important to engage with NEPAD; evaluate ODA and quality of support; and support G-8 forum key issues. It would have been useful to have a dialogue on Millennium Challenge Corporation issues before the fact. NEPAD is viewed as the continent's blueprint for which support is needed so the staffers questioned UK Africa Commission's likely impact on NEPAD.

///NEPAD BUSINESS LUNCH///

10. (SBU) Johannesburg CG Dunn hosted a lunch to provide

business's perspective on NEPAD. Guests included the head of the APR Secretariat, the Executive Director of the American Chamber of Commerce and members of the Chamber's NEPAD Committee, a Hewlett-Packard IT specialist who is a member of NEPAD's E-Africa Commission, and the President of the South African Black Accountants Association. Geoff Rothschild, public relations director of the Johannesburg Securities Exchange and a member of the NEPAD Business Forum, explained the Forum's genesis, ties to companies participating in the World Economic Forum, sectoral focus, and support from President Mbeki. He strongly supported NEPAD, contending that it facilitates sustainable efforts to alleviate poverty. Others around the table repeated this theme, observing that an effective NEPAD is also good for business. The APR official said that feedback from "stakeholders" in the peer review process was a major departure for most African governments and defended the non-punitive character of the APRM, stating that it was not for donors or investors to put Africa's house in order. The strategy of NEPAD leaders is to send a strong persuasive signal to non-participating countries to pressure them into joining up; progress to date has been encouraging.

///INTELLECTUALS ON NEPAD .///

11. (SBU) Four outspoken, much published intellectuals, academicians and journalists from the Center for Policy Studies, Institute for Strategic Studies, University of Witwatersrand, and South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA) met with the S/P staff and PolCounselor. Two agreed that with the OAU-AU transition Africa had reached a "turning point" with a new African-initiated emphasis on good governance, corporate responsibility, conflict resolution via the PSC and plans for the African standby force, and coordinated approach to development via NEPAD. One suggested that it was more a "breaking point" pressed by events in Rwanda, Somalia, Sierra Leone and the DRC and pushed forward by South Africa and Nigeria's presidents. Another said that NEPAD Secretariat was understaffed with no direction or vision or delivery vehicle on how to translate a plan into action, asking what happens after Mbeki and Obasanjo?

12. (SBU) One interlocutor acknowledged a turning point but queried its sustainability. He said the OAU spearheaded political liberation and developed a culture of solidarity from the independence struggle - i.e., don't break ranks. New representative and accountability institutions such as the PAP, HSGIC, Ministerial Council, Economic and Social Council, and proposed courts were positive developments. An interventionist regime now exists, replacing the anticolonial, anti-apartheid focus of yesteryear. The new pretext for action is against genocide, human rights violations and unconstitutional changes of government. NEPAD explicitly links peace, security, democracy and good governance continent-wide. This has led to two contending threads of African nationalism: the "old style" represented by Mugabe of Zimbabwe, the nationalist, sovereign ruler, and anti-colonial fighter who mobilizes Africans around these themes, and, until recently, Khadafi of Libya. Secondly, the new pan-Africanist core group - Mbeki and Obasanjo (along with presidents of Mozambique, Tanzania, Senegal, Ghana, and Botswana) projects a politics of accommodation. Resources also remain a serious problem with five countries accounting for most of the AU budget. There is a policy and implementation gap; the sooner NEPAD integrates into NEPAD the better. He perceived a need to coordinate NEPAD capacity with the RECs, including retention of good staff at the Secretariat.

13. (SBU) Message for USG policymakers: Specify the nature of the partnership vis--vis reform and delivery of donor resources. Specifically, what does Africa get for airing its dirty laundry? There needs to be some form of subtle reinforcement. Blair "is getting ahead of himself, not giving Africa enough time." There needs to be a more honest and judicious way of communicating with Africans. The RECs ability to deliver in one view is questionable; and as a result, the SAG is moving away from SADC to a more continent-wide approach on some issues. NEPAD needs practical deliverables, but donors should not devise a NEPAD agricultural plan. There should be careful statecraft in support of nations doing the right thing (i.e., invitations, White House visits, assistance, etc. For example, the Dutch and Danes left Kenya). The US especially should strengthen Africa's peacekeeping capacity via timely technical assistance and logistical support.

///.AND PERCEPTIONS OF USG///

14. One said that perceptions of hypocrisy and self-interest preoccupation of the US do not play well in Africa as seen by the "jump in Iraq" and "not one soldier in Liberia." Such things affect US credibility. Another opined that the notion that all mistakes are on the US side is wrong, unhelpful and plays into the hands of those who wish to

destabilize and alienate Africans from the United States. NEPAD/APRM could become a new form of conditionality. Avoid coming across as if mutual accountability does not exist. How do we extract outside commitment based on that we do with respect to democracy, human rights and peace in exchange for open market access. Also, using the slogan "African solutions to African problems," potentially "a cop out for reneging on responsibility." Let's avoid "aristocracy of death; there are conflicts everywhere." For example, why expend billions of dollars for one conflict but blame Africa for African conflicts. Western countries and Africans need to learn how to develop consensus on Darfur and Zimbabwe.

///MUSLIMS IN AFRICA///

15. (SBU) Perina noted the USG focus on Africa in the global context of a post-911 world and the need to reach out to Muslims. He asked if there was a danger of these communities changing - for economic or other reasons - in ways that threaten stability? One interlocutor noted an increase in students from all over Africa and Asia in Madrassas (Islamic schools) in Pakistan. Another suggested that it would be a mistake to focus on only that segment of the population, because the USG has angered the entire continent, far beyond the Muslim community. The US "needs partners to defeat this problem." At the 59th UNGA, Mbeki pressed for development and Bush antiterrorism; the issue is how to bridge this divide by compromise, according to the interlocutor. Anti-Americanism is widespread. Another interlocutor echoed these sentiments, stating that strong anti-American sentiment is widespread in Africa. The perception is that America dictates how societies should organize themselves, fostering an existing degree of solidarity between Africa and the Arab world in particular.

16. (SBU) Muslim in Sub-Saharan Africa are moderate communities generally and those in South Africa do not necessarily harbor extremist views, because Africa seems to have embraced the western notion of democracy. Most Africans do not mix religion and politics. The US needs to be very careful in terms of its advocacy of its own beliefs about democracy and antiterrorism, particularly since Africa acknowledges the need to fight terrorism and is putting legislation in place. One said the US comes on "too strong" and does not seem to understand that 911 represented a civil war in Islam in Central Asia, the Middle East and the Horn. In one sense, he said the US was not the real target but a convenient hook for mobilizing this struggle. The US antiterrorist strategy misses the boat on how the US plays into this.

17. (SBU) One interlocutor suggested the need for a different model of US diplomacy, changing tone and style while still acting in its own self-interest. A different approach could make a difference. US diplomats should cultivate and develop personal relationships, building trust. Much of the dynamics of the Zimbabwe situation relates to failure to do that. Blair fell right into that mode and made it difficult for the SAG and others to take the moral position on Zimbabwe. Why not quietly fund the right things? For example, brisk debt relief would win the US some points, as would follow-through on Monterrey. There needs to be a bridge. They recognized that America was hurting after 911 and not interested in talking about development. However, the world was ready for cooperation but instead reacted to post-911 US actions with tremendous alienation. The perception is that America is strong and democratic at home but a dictator abroad.

18. (SBU) SAG reaction: Regarding the few Muslims in South Africa, DFA DDG Ambassador Mamabola stated that there was a history of coexistence and governance, but Darfur, in his view, will be a test for Africa. He added that this issue threatened Nigeria as well. A close ANC advisor and Muslim scholar noted the proliferation of proselytizing Saudi Arabian text books in South Africa that can be expected to have an impact in the future.

19. (SBU) Comment: S/P staffers considered the mission to be highly successful and useful input into the US policymaking process on NEPAD and an approach to Islam in Africa. Results of the October 12-13 NEPAD peace and security workshop on post conflict reconstruction and the October 22-23 Multi-stakeholders Review in South Africa should indicate how Africa's grades its own progress to date and perhaps suggest how it plans to proceed with existing and potential partners.

(U) Ambassador Perina cleared this message.

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